nature net

The NatureKenya Newsletter www.naturekenya.org Sept 04

EVENTS

TALKS & VIDEOS

Evolution of Skin Colour

Illustrated talk by Prof. Nina Jablonski

Wed 22 Sept '04

6:30 p.m. Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums, Nairobi

Organised by Kenya Museum Society

KMS members 300/-, Non-members 500/- Child 100/-

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COURSES

Aloe Workshop

11 September '04 with Prof. Len Newton, from the Kenyatta University Botany Dept.

Identification and growing of aloes, organised by the Nairobi Botanic Garden, and led by Len Newton.

Fee: 1500/-, which includes tea and lunch. Book and pay at the Nairobi Botanic Garden, National Museum, Nairobi tel: 0722 756757

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Nature Fair

Nairobi Arboretum

Sat 2 & Sun 3 October 04

Come to the Nature Fair

Whether your interest is bugs, birds or botany, mammals or frogs there is something for everyone.

Come this October to the first Nature Fair, to be held at the Nairobi Arboretum, organised by Nature Kenya.

The Nature Fair is a display of Nature Kenya animal and plant action groups and community groups, who have organised a great day out for the family, with lots to see and do, including:

- Birdwalks
- Treewalks
- Community Arts & Crafts
- Children's activities
- Succulenta display & sales

There will also be stands selling products and services for the wildlife enthusiast.

Entertainment

At the fair you can attend a continuous programme of illustrated talks, see wildlife videos and watch the community drama performances.

Stand space available

Tent space, with table and chairs, is available at different prices. Please contact the Nature Fair coordinator Lara Salido, at Nature Kenya as soon as possible.

Safaricom

Celebrating nature and its contribution to the lives of people

SEPTEMBER AT A GLIMPSE

Sat 4	ASF Birdwalks & NRF walk
Sat 11	Tree Walk
Sun 19	Sunday Birdwalk
Wed 22	KMS talk
Sun 26	Succulenta Plant hunt
Mon 27	Tree Walk

Birdwalks every Wednesday Morning

Bird ringing every Thursday Marning

Editorial Team

Editor Catherine Ngarachu

Evening Skies Fleur Ng'weno

Naturalist's Corner Dino Martins

FIELD TRIPS

Plant hunting at Kitengela

Sunday 26 September 04

A day trip with picnic lunch ta Kitengela and Rex Dabie's new garden. Carry your own drinks and a cantributian far the buffet lunch. Please liaise with Sue Allan (890375 or 0733 891721) abaut the lunch and sharing transpart.

Far directians please send for a copy of the Succulenta newsletter *Succulent News*, fram the Nature Kenya frant affice.

NATURE KENYA, P. O. Box 44486, 00100 GPO Nairobi Tel: 3749957 / 3746090 Fax: 3741049 E-mail: office@naturekenya.org

action

GRANTS

The International Foundation for Science (IFS)

IFS is providing research grants for amounts up to USD 12,000. An IFS grant is intended for the purchase of basic tools for research: equipment, expendable supplies, literature and field activities. Applications are welcome on a year-round basis.

Applicants should be at the beginning of their research career, have a minimum academic degree of an MSc/MA or the equivalent experience, and be younger than 40.

Candidates must be attached to a university or non-profit making research institution. IFS gives preference to researchers whose grant will be administered by a national research institute (eg university, research centre, NGO).

For full details go to www.ifs.se or write to the International Foundation for Science, Karlavagen 108, 5th Floor, SE – 115 26 Stockholm, SWEDEN

The BP Conservation Programme Awards

Application deadline for 2005 awards is 31st October 2004

•Does your project address a biodiversity conservation priority of global importance at the species or habitat level, preferably linking with established work plans, e.g. national biodiversity action plans?

• Does your project involve local people?

• Has your project been approved by the government, a non-governmental organisation or university within the host country?

• Is the team made up of and led by students or early career conservationists?

• Do you have at least 3 people in your team and are team members of different nationalities? (The BP Conservation Programme is able to help with creating international links for your project).

• Does your project last for less than one year (but show potential for follow-up work)?

If you answer yes to all the above questions, you may be eligible a BP award. Awards for first time projects range from £5,000 to £12,000; follow-up awards average £25,000; and consolidation awards receive £50,000.

For full guidelines email Robyne Dalzen dalzr1@bp.com

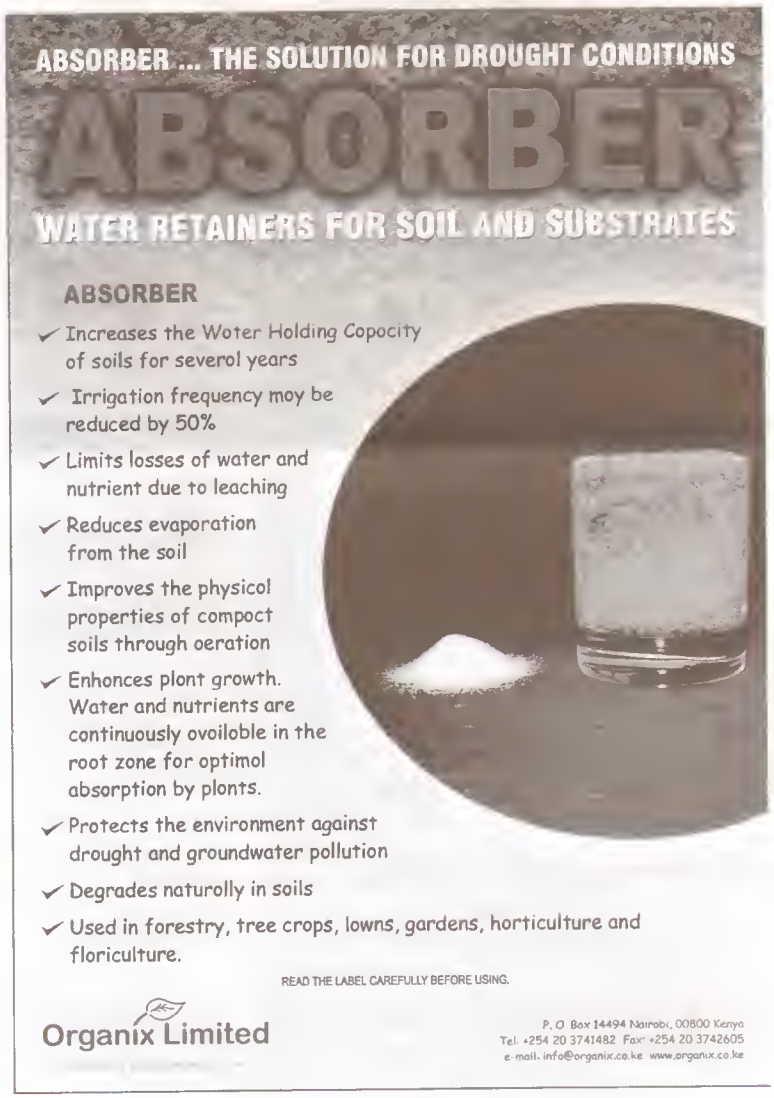
RSPB Small Grants for Research on Endangered Bird Species

Each year, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the BirdLife Partner in the UK, offers grants of up to US$ 1,000 to fund research on bird species listed by IUCN as "Critically Endangered" or "Endangered". Only work on these species will be considered for grants. Please go to www.birdlife.net/datazone/search/species_search.html, if unsure.

Priority will be given to people working in-country, particularly BirdLife Partners and other conservation NGOs.

The closing date for applications is 31 October 2004.

For further information via email write to: Dr Paul Donald, RSPB paul.donald@rspb.org.uk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SNAKEBITE SEMINAR 2004

Bio-Ken Snake Farm will be holding the fourth 'International Snakebite Seminar' at Hemingway's Resort in Watamu on Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd of October 2004, commencing at 9am. Our guest of honour will be the Minister of Health, The Honourable Charity Ngilu. Our lead speaker will be Professor David Warrell, the world's leading authority on the correct treatment of snakebite, from Oxford University in England.

Please RSVP to snakes@africaonline.co.ke. Those who do reply will be given priority for the seminar. We look forward to seeing you there!

CLASSIFIEDS

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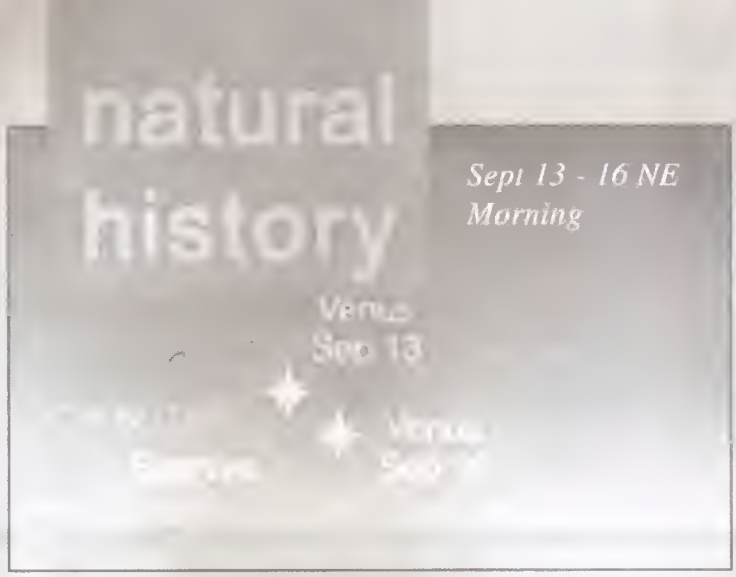

EVENING SKY

Moon, Sept 2004

6 Sept **Last Quarter**; 14 Sept **New Moon**; 21 Sept **First Quarter**; 28 Sept **Full Moon**

September Stars

September skies are full of birds. Overhead is the constellation Aquila, the Eagle. Its bright star **Altair** is flanked by two smaller stars.

Below Aquila to the north, Cygnus the Swan is flying across the northern sky. Its bright star **Deneb** is about halfway between the horizon and overhead. Less bright stars form the swan's body, wings, and long outstretched neck.

To the left (west) of Deneb is the brilliant star **Vega**. The Milky Way, a wide pale band made up of millions and millions of stars, stretches across the sky from northeast to southwest. The Milky Way is the galaxy to which our Sun belong.

Between Cygnus and Aquila is a very dark stretch of sky in the middle of the Milky Way. This is known as the great rift; it appears dark because of dust obscuring our view of the stars behind.

Pegasus the Flying Horse is rising in the east (to the right of Cygnus). This large constellation is easy to spot as the stars form a huge square shape in the middle portion, and do not have the stars of our own galaxy in the background.

Scorpius is setting headfirst in the west (look on the 19th - the crescent moon is nearby). Scorpius is followed by the constellation Sagittarius, the Archer, shaped like a teapot or kettle.

Planets, Sept 2004

Venus shines brightly in the morning sky, rising around about 2 hours before the Sun. Look on September 13th - the Beehive is nearby. The Beehive is a prominent star cluster in the constellation of Cancer the Crab. At a distance of 500 light years, these stars are close neighbours of ours. The individual stars can be made out by the naked eye if the sky is very clear but it is more fun to use some lenses for a better view. Cancer is currently low in the sky before sunrise, and directly east-northeast.

Saturn is now in the morning sky; it seems to be in the constellation Gemini. This is a good time for viewing because the air is cleaner at dawn.

Sun

On September 22nd the sun crosses to the south of the celestial equator, marking the start of spring (the vernal equinox) in the southern hemisphere, and the start of autumn in the northern hemisphere.

NATURALIST'S CORNER

A Nest in the North

By Dino Martins
Comments or inquiries
email dinom@elci.org

In the hooked tangle of a thick, thorny acacia, sits a tiny nest. Woven from silken spiderwebs, fluffy seeds and lichens, it is pear shaped, and hangs in an oval from the thorny twig. From the nest, through the criss-cross of thorn-studded branches, the vast valley shimmers with heat. The haze fades to blue and purple in the distance, where the rocks meet the sky. Flowering acacia trees, resplendent with ivory-tinted blossoms, dot the flat valley floor.

A noisy twittering stirs the air. Flying rapidly through the tangle of thorns, a female sunbird swiftly sweeps down to the nest. She hovers outside for a second, then moves forward and wriggles in. Once safely bedded down and comfortable, having checked on the precious eggs within, she pokes her head out. Her throat is bright orange, not from the colour of her plumage, but of the pollen that has rubbed off on her chin. This is the pollen from numerous aloe flowers where she has been feeding.

Aloes are pollinated by sunbirds, whose long, narrow beaks are adapted to reach for nectar in the tubular flowers. The sunbird watches the world from the vantage of her nest.

This is a Shining Sunbird *Nectarinia habessinica turkanae*, described in *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania* as 'An uncommon thorn-bush species'. It is a real treat to find the nest and watch the female feeding at aloes. The nest is located in a short thorn bush, an *Acacia mellifera*. This shrubby species is armed with wickedly sharp, recurved thorns. The nest is well-placed, located deep inside the bush, where predators cannot easily reach it. This nest was located in the Kerio Valley, in a flat area of thorny bush near the western wall of the valley, and observed on 22nd June 2004.

Keep an eye out for sunbird nests wherever you go - they are often found in thick bushes, hedges and other similar vegetation. The sunbird nests are easily recognised by the shape (drooping and pear-like) and the mixture of lichens and cobwebs used as a building material. Please remember - if you do find a nest, of any bird, do fill out a Nest Record Card. These can be obtained from the Museum's Ornithology Department.

Bird Hotline 3749957

{August Sighting}
Lemon Doves *Nairobi Arboretum* Wednesday Morning Birdwalk
Buff-throated Apalis *Eseki Forest* Bernard Chege

regular activities

BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museums' Nairobi Botanic Garden, at 7:00 a.m. every Thursday.

TREE WALKS

Guided tree walks in the Arboretum on the second Saturday and last Monday, i.e. **11 & 27 September from 9:30 a.m.** Meet at the Arboretum gate. *Those who are not members of FONA or Nature Kenya pay Ksh 100/- fee on arrival at the gate.*

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. *Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.*

SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet at the National Museum, Nairobi car park at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, **i.e. 19 September**. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

Ngong Road Forest Walks (Nairobi)

Organised by the Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust, nature walks are held on the first and third Saturdays of the month i.e. **4 & 18 September, at 9:00 a.m.** Meet at the stairs leading to the Restaurant at the Racecourse. Call Anthony Charo to confirm on 575207 or 0733 712406.

Lake Victoria Sunset Birders (Kisumu)

The Lake Victoria Sunset Birders are a Nature Kenya Site Support Group and organise bird walks at sites in and around Kisumu every Friday of the month. For further details call 035 42952 or email wck@vicweb.net

FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month, i.e. **18 September** Please call Marlene Reid on (041) 491 648 to confirm

ARABUKO-SOKOKE (COAST)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association is on the first Saturday of each month i.e. **4 September, at 6:30 a.m.** from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person. KWS fees now apply (100/- Citizens, 500/- Residents)

DECLARATION

Nature Kenya does not accept any responsibility whatsoever in respect of negligence of any of its staff, volunteers or members organising the outings/trips or for any loss, injury, death or damage to property.

Plan your weekend of other break to stay at the Kinangop Guest House

Perched on the Kinangop Plateau with incredible views across the Rift Valley, the farm combines tussock-grass pasture, indigenous forest, and attractive gardens. The guesthouse is comfortable and fully furnished. Visitors can enjoy hikes and walks on the farm or go further afield with local guides.

For more information, brochure and non-member rates please contact Nature Kenya.

Guest House rates: Day visit 350/-

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3	4,900/-	7,400/-
4	5,800/-	8,300/-

Nature *Kenya*

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